(c) and (d) No, Sir. However, bills for an amount of Rs. 37.23 Crores for recovery of cost of Security Patrolling of track have been preferred on Government of Assam for realisation.

Purchase of sub-standard sleepers from Malaysia

4760. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is fact that the Railways purchased sub-standard sleepers worth Rs. 20.3 crore, namely Balau-wooden specials, from Malaysia in 1990, from certain supplier, despite the reservations of Forest Research Institute, Dehradun;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof, including the names of firms and the quantity purchased from each and how much quantity is still lying unused with the Railways; and

(c) what action Government had taken against those firms which supplied inferior goods with the connivance of Rail Staff?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) No Sir. In response to a specific reference from Ministry of Railways, in Feb. 1986, Forest Research Institute (FRI), Dehradun advised that Balau was described as very hard, heavy, strong and durable wood and superior to Indian Sal (Shorea Robusta) in all respects; and the wood being stronger than Indian Sal wood from strength point of view was suitable for Railway sleepers. Later in May, 1987 it also apprised Railways of certain inherent drawbacks of Balau wood such as, it was liable to splitting on drying and, checking, splitting and surface cracking during air seasoning under Malayasian conditions and it recommended procurement of a small quantity for trial purpose. As the FRI did not conduct any tests on the Balau timber itself and its advice was based on published literature, Indian Railways also obtained the first hand information from director, Civil Engineering, Ministry of Transport, Malayasian Railways (PKTM) who recommended use of Balau wood for Railway sleepers as (PKTM) had been using this wood on their system and based on recommendations of FRI and PKTM. Indian Railways decided to import a small quantity of 41,399 cum. of Balau wood for

Railway sleepers. This quantity was considered adequate for conducting field trial in varying field conditions on different Zonal Railways.

In fact, the decision of importing Balau wood was not questionable as such, the real problem arose when the supplier did not supply Balau wood and instead sleepers made of Kampas wood were supplied. In respect of supply made by M/s. Madhya Pradesh Export Corporation (MPEC), the matter was investigated by Railway Board Vigilance and CBI. The concerned Railway officials as well as State Government officials have been taken up under DAR for the malpractices. On the recommendation of CBI, proceedings against MPEC for banning of business dealings for a period of 5 years have also been initiated. Similarly, M/s B.N. Padia's case was investigated, by zonal Railway vigilance and they were blacklisted for indulging in malpractices and the concerned Railway officials were taken up under DAR.

(b) A small quantity of sleepers as detailed below has been kept for attending to emergencies as further procurement of wooden sleepers was banned by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in May 1999 while against item No.3, some sleepers have been retained till finalisation of CBI investigation. Details are as under:

Sl. No.	Contract No.	Name of Firm	Qty. purchased	Qty. still lying
1	87/WSC/MSW/ 4 dt. 23/12/87	M/s B.N. Padia	2000 Cums	1072 cum approx.
2	87/WSC/MSW/ 3 dt. 23/1287	M/s M/P Export Corpn. Bhopal	10,507 Cums	Nil
3	88/Track-III/ MSW/9 dt. 31/12/88	M/s M/MP Export Corpn.	28,892 Cums	1263 cum approx.

(c) (i) The firm M/S B.N. Padia was black listed and business was banned for three years.

(ii) On the recommendation of CBI, proceedings against M/s MPEC for banning of business dealings for a period of 5 years have also been initiated.